

carthartica in recent years which has enabled the Brimstone butterfly *Gonepteryx rhamni* L. to expand its range. Before deciding which larval foodplants to use one should consult the distribution of species, which is now best done by consulting the recently published *Millennium Atlas of butterflies of Britain and Ireland* in which it can be discovered which species are most like to occur near the garden in question, and plant accordingly.

Concerning plants to be grown, the two most attractive nectar species I remember catching butterflies on in father's garden were the *Buddleia* and the Michaelmas daisies, both of which were often swarming with numbers of butterflies by day and moths by night. White *Buddleia* I am not so enamoured of, for both the blue and white varieties grew in the Entomological Field Station here in Cambridge and one rarely saw a butterfly on the white; they clearly preferred the blue. As for the moths' preferences, I cannot say. I would also like to know which species of moth John Badmin found attracted to *Nicotiana*. Yes, it has a lovely scent, but it also has a very deep trumpet flower and its nectar can only be reached by moths with a long proboscis, such as Humming-bird *Macroglossum stellatarum* L. and *Convolvulus Agrius convolvuli* L. Hawk-moths. Privet and ivy blossom are also very attractive to moths, but so many hedges are kept so trimmed they rarely, if ever, get a chance to flower!

In spring one of the most attractive flowers to moths is that of Sallows *Salix* spp., and in the autumn that of the Ivy *Hedera helix*. In between these times, are many of the naturally occurring flowers of the meadow and wayside — Bramble, Meadowsweet, Dandelion, Ragged Robin, hawkweeds, Scabious, Bugle, thistles, Garlic mustard, Ladies smock. Of the more ornamental flowers I would suggest *Alyssum*, Sweet William, *Aubretia*, *Phlox*, mignonette, *Aster* species, Michaelmas daisies, Candytuff, *Sedum*, and of course *Buddleia davidii* - preferably the dark blue variety. Nor should one neglect the needs of other insects, or indeed invertebrates. Some Golden rain and Fennel are extremely attractive to many species of Diptera and a pile or two of rotting wood, a heap of straw and a few tiles laid with space underneath them are ideal habitats for many invertebrates, not just insects.— BRIAN O. C. GARDINER, 2, Highfield Avenue, Cambridge CB4 2AL.

The Population Crash of the Small Tortoiseshell *Aglais urticae* (L.) (Lep.: Nymphalidae)

With reference to Leonard McLeod's note (*Ent. Rec.* **114**: 201-202), I can confirm that there has also been a population crash of the Small Tortoiseshell in the last four years on the Isle of Wight, although it is now (2002) beginning to build up to its former numbers. In fact, I did not see one example in 2000, I saw one only in 2001 and two this year in the garden, although it has been quite plentiful in some parts of the Island this year.

Rowell (2001. *Hampshire & Isle of Wight Butterfly & Moth Report*. Butterfly Conservation) observed that many of the larvae had been parasitised and he sent the

parasitic pupae to Dr Mark Shaw at the National Museums of Scotland for identification. These were identified in about equal numbers as belonging to two species of Tachinidae – the common *Phryxe vulgaris* and *Sturmia bella*, a species only recently discovered in Britain. However, from two pupae a brood of *Pteromalus puparum* emerged; this is a small parasitoid that usually attacks white butterflies. Dr Shaw writes that the species oviposits into very fresh pupae, and sometimes a female waits patiently on the host larva that is going off to pupate. Dr Shaw also confirmed that Comma *Polygonia c-album* (L.) pupae sent to him from the Isle of Wight had also been attacked by *Sturmia bella* and Red Admiral *Vanessa atalanta* (L.) pupae by the parasitic wasp *Microgaster subcompletus*.

John Rowell observed that 20 Small Tortoiseshell pupae produced only four adult butterflies. Ten percent were attacked by the *Pteromalus puparum* and 35% by *Phryxe vulgaris*. However, the Small Tortoiseshells were also attacked by the newcomer, *Sturmia bella*, accounting for a further 35% loss. If vanessids in Britain are now being attacked by this newcomer, it may explain why this butterfly has shown such a dramatic drop in numbers.

One female parasitic fly is capable of attacking in the region of 150 butterfly larvae and several generations can occur annually between May and October. It would seem that the addition of another parasite could bring about a larger cyclical variation in the number of butterflies and that we could see similar declines in the Red Admiral, Peacock and Comma in future years.— SAM KNILL-JONES, Roundstone, 2 School Green Road, Freshwater, Isle of Wight P040 9AL.

A brief note on Cambridge butterflies January to 15 August 2002

Unlike previous years, no winter vanessids appeared until April when a single Peacock *Inachis io* L. was spotted, followed by a Comma *Polygonia c-album* L. a few days later. No other vanessids were seen until 3 August when a Red Admiral *Vanessa atalanta* L. was seen on the *Buddleia*. Now I have four *Buddleia* plants in my garden, and there are more next door, and I pass even more, in a very sunny position, when walking to the local shops. All have been in flower for about six weeks and apart from the Red Admiral mentioned above they have been bereft of any vannesid, unlike some previous years when they were swarming with Painted Ladies *Cynthia cardui* L. and/or Small tortoiseshells *Aglais urticae* L. While one may hope I shall be able to record a resurgence of a few species in the coming autumn, the prognosis does not augur well I fear.

On the bright side, however, has been the re-appearance in July and early August of a number of specimens of the Wall *Lasiommata megera* L., which I have not seen locally for some years. Also out in more numbers than usual are Meadow Brown *Maniola iurtina* L. which have a habit of flying into our sun-room when the door is open whenever we get a hot spell and they have to be rescued from the roof before they die of heat-stroke. Earlier in the year, I had the usual sighting of Brimstones